UNITED
NATIONS

ST

Secretariat

ST/IC/1991/4
30 January 1991

INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for General Services

Subject: SOFTWARE PRODUCTS FOR MICROCOMPUTERS

1. In administrative instruction ST/AI/355 of 7 September 1988, the Technological Innovations Board established guidelines for the acquisition, use and support of microcomputers. As indicated in paragraph 21 of that instruction, the Office Automation Section, Technological Innovations Service, Electronic Services Division (OAS/TIS/ESD) maintains a list of software products which can be supported by that Section. Support in this instance includes assistance with the acquisition and installation of appropriate software packages and trouble-shooting in case problems arise in the operation of a software package. The present circular gives microcomputer users updated information on packages currently supported by ESD.

2. If an office requires software which is not mentioned below, ESD will assist with the selection and acquisition of such software. However, in such cases, it is the responsibility of the individual office to arrange for the technical support and training for such software. It is important to note that all copies of software packages residing on microcomputers owned by the Organization must have been purchased and loaded in accordance with the licensing agreement which is included with the software package. The personal computer user must be able to show proof that software on the machine was legally acquired.

3. The guidelines state that all personal computer applications must run under the MS/DOS operating system. MS/DOS was chosen because it is the most widely used microcomputer operating system and because ESD has extensive experience with it. Although there are many different types of personal computer programs, most of the Organization's work is concentrated in the eight areas which are described below.

4. Word-processing programs allow one to create, edit and print documents, memoranda and other material by computer. Word-processing programs were reviewed by the Working Group of the Technological Innovations Board and WordPerfect was

recommended as the standard. The selection of this software package as the United Nations word-processing standard for microcomputers for the next three years was stated in administrative instruction ST/AI/361 of 29 March 1990. (For the minicomputer environment, the Wang OIS/VS word-processing product remains the standard at the present time.) A special transition programme, including extensive training, was established to guarantee a well-planned and smooth transition without loss in productivity.

5. Spreadsheet packages support processing of financial and numerical data, with simple or complex calculations performed. For many years LOTUS 1-2-3 has been the choice of many users. ESD will install and support LOTUS. It also supports a package called "QUATTRO". The QUATTRO software provides the same functions as LOTUS, with the advantage of a superior user interface. All LOTUS functions and macros are supported in QUATTRO, and all LOTUS files can be read directly without conversion.

6. Database software permits management of one's own files in a structured environment. The original dBASE II software set the standard for database software, followed by dBASE III and dBASE IV. The Electronic Services Division has fully supported the various releases of dBASE. It also supports the PARADOX database program. PARADOX is a fully relational database package which supports all of the same functions as dBASE. The PARADOX software is generally much simpler for the novice personal computer user to understand and use. It supports import and export of dBASE files and provides the ability to develop customized applications in much the same way as in dBASE.

7. Graphics capability permits the display and printing of high-quality graphs and charts from structured data. In this area, the Electronic Services Division is currently supporting the HARVARD GRAPHICS package. It allows import from various other popular data management programs with LOTUS formats.

8. Desk-top publishing facilitates high quality output of documents, graphics and structured data. Xerox Ventura Publisher was selected as the United Nations standard as described in administrative instruction ST/AI/359 of 12 December 1989, following a thorough review by a special Task Force of the Working Group of the Technological Innovations Board. Xerox Ventura Publisher is a sophisticated software package with wide capabilities, but requires considerable hardware support and user training. For less sophisticated needs, the WordPerfect word-processing package provides built-in publishing capabilities that can adequately meet the needs of many users.

9. Communications software permits linkage to other computers to run programs not resident on one's own machine. ESD supports one product for each generic type of communication. For communication from the personal computer to the IBM mainframe, the IRMA software (which also involves installation of a communications card) and SIMPC for use of the telephone dial-up facility are supported. For communications to the Wang VS minicomputers, ESD supports the DPZ 2110 terminal emulation software. For communications to computers outside the Organization, PROCOMM and CROSSTALK are supported.

/...

10. Local area networks (LAN) enable personal computer users to share resources, such as files, printers and communications lines. For personal computer LANs, Banyan VINES is the preferred LAN operating system for the Organization. It is recognized, however, that conditions at individual duty stations may necessitate the use of other LAN operating systems. Electronic mail within LAN environments will be supported using one of several products which will run in the LAN environment supported by ESD.

11. Utility programs allow the user to do hard-disk management and other housekeeping tasks. FASTBACK is excellent for doing rapid back-up onto diskette of one's critical files. For disk management ESD recommends the NORTON ADVANCED UTILITIES. Although the Division has loaded the WANG SYSTEM SERVICES for user menus on most machines, the NORTON COMMANDER can be used instead as an intelligent interface to MS/DOS. WINDOWS 3.0 is also supported as a further alternative to WANG SYSTEM SERVICES or NORTON COMMANDER.

12. Application development for microcomputers may require programming in a microcomputer programming language. The programming language supported is the C language. ESD also supports BASIC which is usually packaged with the operating system. However, users are encouraged to develop their applications with standard packages like LOTUS, QUATTRO, dBASE and PARADOX, since individual, customized program development with C contains the grave risk of producing non-standard, incompatible, undocumented and difficult-to-maintain applications.

13. Information circular ST/IC/1990/41 of 14 June 1990 entitled "Training for office automation technology", explains the options available to staff members who require training in microcomputer software. It also outlines the eligibility criteria and procedures by which staff may participate in the available programmes.

14. None of the information contained in the present circular is intended to imply any endorsement by the United Nations of any product mentioned above.

15. Additional information concerning any of the items described above may be obtained from OAS/TIS/ESD (ext. 3.6445).

16. Information circular ST/IC/89/58 of 5 September 1989 on software products for microcomputers is hereby cancelled and superseded.